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Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)
Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com

ARGENTINA-BRED BLUE PRIZE ROMPS IN GRADE II FALLS CITY 'CAP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Nov. 23, 2017) – Merriebelle Stable LLC's 4-year-old filly **Blue Prize (Arg)** took the lead from pacesetter **Money'soncharlotte** on the far and drew off in the stretch for a decisive 8 ½-length triumph over **Tiger Moth** in the 102nd running of the \$200,000 Falls City Handicap (Grade II) for fillies and mares on Thanksgiving Day at Churchill Downs.

Blue Prize, trained by **Ignacio "Nacho" Correas IV** and ridden by **James Graham**, ran 1 1/8 miles over a fast track in 1:49.30 – the fastest Falls City since **Silent Eskimo** set the stakes record of 1:48.85 in the 1999 renewal – to notch her first graded stakes win in the United States. At age 3, she won the 1 ¼-mile Seleccion (GI) at Hipodromo Argentino de Palermo in her native Argentina.

"This horse just doesn't get tired," Graham said. "I think the distance today was perfect for her."

Blue Prize, who entered the Falls City off a third-place finish in the Grade I Spinster at Keeneland on Oct. 8, stalked in second off the early pace set by multiple stakes winner Money'soncharlotte, who led the field of six through fractions of :23.82 and :47.76. Blue Prize ranged up to her outside as they entered the far turn and clocked six furlongs in 1:12.34 with even-money favorite **Faithfully**, the Southern California invader from the barn of Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert**, attempting to keep up in third. Blue Prize got the jump on her rivals and drew away from the field down the lane with overwhelming authority.

"She took a little bit to put things together mentally when I first got her to the United States," Correas said. "She figured it out in her second start at Saratoga. I think she didn't really like the wet track at Keeneland in her last start but besides that she's run really well. I thought she was training the best she has been in her career leading into this race and she proved it."

Blue Prize, who carried 118 pounds during the victory, is a daughter of Pure Prize out of the Not for Sale (Arg) mare Blues for Sale (Arg), and was bred by **Bioart S A**.

The victory was worth \$122,760 to her owners and brought Blue Prize's career earnings to \$333,860 from a record of 3-6-1 in 10 starts.

Blue Prize returned \$8, \$4.40 and \$3.20 as the 3-1 third betting choice. Tiger Moth, who carried 117 pounds under **Florent Geroux**, rallied from the rear to finish second and returned \$10.80 and \$5.20. Faithfully was another length in third and paid \$2.60 to show under **Robby Albarado** while carrying 120 pounds.

Rachel's Temper, **Motown Lady** and **Moneyoncharlotte**, who shared the 120-pound starting high weight with Faithfully, completed the order of finish. **Weep No More** was scratched.

The Falls City is the traditional main dish on the Thanksgiving Day menu at Churchill Downs – a Louisville tradition since 1969 where more than 7,000 turkey dinners are served with all the trimmings, making it the largest number anywhere in the region.

This year's holiday program also included the 40th running of the \$100,000 River City Handicap (GIII), a 1 1/8-mile test for older horses over the Matt Winn Turf Course, which was won by **Shining Copper**.

Racing at Churchill Downs resumes on "Black Friday" with a 12-race program that begins at 1 p.m. (all times Eastern). The 144th running of the \$500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) highlights a program that also includes the 27th running of the \$200,000 Mrs. Revere (GII) for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/16 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course and the \$80,000-added Dream Supreme Overnight Stakes for fillies and mares at six furlongs.

SHINING COPPER WIRES FOES IN GRADE III RIVER CITY 'CAP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Nov. 23, 2017) – Shining Copper led every step of the way under leading rider **Corey Lanerie** to score a 1 ¾-length victory over **Kasaqui (Arg)** in Thursday's 40th running of the \$100,000 River City Handicap (GIII) on Thanksgiving Day at Churchill Downs.

Shining Copper, owned **Ken and Sarah Ramsey**, ran 1 1/8 miles over "yielding" turf in 1:52.78. In doing so, **Mike Maker** landed the 1,997th win of his training career.

Breaking from post 4 in the field of 13 3-year-olds and up, Shining Copper broke on top and dictated the terms through fractions of :24.28, :48.77 and 1:14.24 with Thatcher Street tracking in second and never within a length of the leader. Shining Copper inched away down the backstretch, repelled bids at the top of the lane and held sway in the final stages for the first graded stakes win of his 31-race career.

"We knew going in his style of running and once we broke well from the gate he never looked back," Lanerie said. "I asked him a bit to go at the three-eighths pole and he responded when horses got close to him. It was a great job by Mike and his team to get him ready."

The victory was worth \$57,040 and increased the Kentucky-bred's earnings to \$697,169. He boasts a record of 8-4-7 in 31 starts. In February of 2016, Shining Copper came within a neck of becoming a Grade I winner when he was second to **Lukes Alley** in the \$350,000 Gulfstream Park Turf Handicap (GI).

"He got pretty sick at the end of the Saratoga meet last year," Maker said. "He was off for nearly a year but has come back and done well with everything we've asked of him. His best way of going is on the front end and he got a perfect setup today."

Shining Copper, who carried the 119-pound starting high weight on Thursday, returned mutuels of \$10.40, \$6 and \$4 as the 4-1 second betting choice.

Kasaqui, making the final start of his career, prevailed in a four-horse photo for the minors and finished a head in front of **Revved Up**. Defending champ Thatcher Street was another nose back in fourth with **Team Colors** an additional head back in fifth.

Kasaqui, ridden by **Ricardo Santana Jr.** at 117 pounds, returned \$9.20 and \$6.40. Third-place finisher Revved Up under **Robby Albarado** and 117 pounds paid \$3.60 to show.

After Thatcher Street and Team Colors, the order of finish was completed by **Christian C, Some in Tieme (Brz)**, 3-1 favorite **War Correspondent, Vettori Kin (Brz)**, **Applicator, Shotgun Kowboy, Coco Mon** and **Zulu Alpha**. **Turf Titan** and **Gostibehere** were scratched.

At age 7, Shining Copper joined **Same Old Wish** (1997) and **Blues Street** (2011) as the oldest winners of the River City.

FALLS CITY QUOTES

JAMES GRAHAM, jockey of BLUE PRIZE (ARG) (winner): "This horse just doesn't get tired. You simply have to cross off her last race at Keeneland over the slop. She's been brilliantly consistent throughout her career besides that race. I think the distance today was perfect for her. When she ran in the Locust Grove she ran well but I think it was just a bit too short for her. I breezed her from the gate at Keeneland (Nov. 16) and she looked like a completely different horse."

IGNACIO CORREAS IV, trainer of BLUE PRIZE (ARG) (winner): "She took a little bit to put things together mentally when I first got her to the United States. She figured it out in her second start at Saratoga. I think she didn't really like the wet track at Keeneland in her last start but besides that she's run really well. I thought she was training the best she has been in her career leading into this race and she proved it."

BRAD COX, trainer of TIGER MOTH (runner-up): “Her last two races have been a little flat. Probably the mud race at Keeneland was more a throw-out than the one-turn mile here. It wasn’t really what she liked. She doesn’t care for the one-turn mile here at Churchill, anyway. But it was good to get her form back and we’ll see what happens after this. We may try her at Oaklawn a few times. She’s five-turning-six and she’s probably going to have a date with a stallion sometime next year, but it was good to get her back in good form. It was her first really good race at Churchill. She’s always trained well here and that’s why we’ve been plugging away with her, because she’s trained so well. But she’s been doing well, so we took another shot and she rewarded us today with a good effort. The winner was clearly the best and hopefully we can build on this.”

FLORENT GEROUX, rider on TIGER MOTH (runner-up): “I was hoping for a little more pace in front. She settled very nicely like she always does and she was giving her best at the end.”

RIVER CITY QUOTES

COREY LANERIE, jockey of SHINING COPPER (winner): “We knew going in his style of running and once we broke well from the gate he never looked back. I asked him a bit to go at the three-eighths pole and he responded when horses got close to him. It was a great job by Mike and his team to get him ready.”

MIKE MAKER, trainer of SHINING COPPER (winner): “He got pretty sick at the end of the Saratoga meet last year. He was off for nearly a year but has come back and done well with everything we’ve asked of him. His best way of going is on the front end and he got a perfect setup today.”

IGNACIO CORREAS IV, trainer of KASAQUII (ARG) (runner-up): “He retired in style. We are so proud of him and so happy that he finished in that manner. That’s the manner that he deserved to go out in, so we are happy.”

RICARDO SANTANA JR., jockey on KASAQUI (ARG) (runner-up): “He tried hard today. We got a perfect trip and saved ground, and turning for home I took him out and gave me a little kick. He was just second-best.”

ROBBY ALBARADO, rider on REVVED UP (third): “I kind of had to make a longer run around the outside. With the temporary rail up it makes you really wide and I couldn’t take a chance of getting him stopped. He’s a big horse and you’ve got to keep moving. So I had to go wide and it maybe cost me some position there. It may have cost him second, but you never know.”

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